

Genesis 41: 53 - 42: 28; “Joseph’s Tender Mercies & Christ’s” Sermon # 104
in the series – “Beginnings”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on November 10th, 2019, in the Morning Worship Service.

I want to speak to you at this hour about how sinners come to Christ. How does Christ really deliver you when you come to Him? For the events of Joseph’s brethren going down to Egypt to purchase grain, and the way that they were treated by him, give us a good illustration of how Christ receives, and how He treats sinners who come to Him for salvation. Joseph’s brothers did not recognize him, but he recognized them and he treated them in a way of mercy. But while he was showing them mercy, he did not overlook their sins. Before he gave them what they needed to live, he would have them to come to a conviction of their sins. So the question that I would like you to consider with me, is this – How did Joseph, who intended to show his brothers mercy, bring them to the place where they understood that they were sinners needing mercy, as well as men who needed food? And how is it then, that Christ does the same, spiritually, for every needy sinner who comes to Him? Well, I believe that Joseph showed his brothers tender mercies, and yet he brought them to conviction of their sin by the following means.

1st of all - He opened all the storehouses and he sold to the Egyptians.

(Chapter 41: 54 - Chapter 42: 5)

It says in verse 55 – “So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread.” “Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, ‘Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do.’” So, Joseph has been exalted to Pharaoh’s right hand, and all of Egypt knows it; because Pharaoh has made sure that everyone will know that he has appointed him to the task of storing up grain for the coming famine. “Bow the knee” is the command that has been given to everyone in the country of Egypt. Joseph we have seen, has been faithful to store up grain as the sand on the seashore. He stored up so much that “he stopped counting it, for it was immeasurable”, it says in verse 49 of Chapter 41. All this is a picture and type of the ministry, the mission, and the kingdom rule of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In my last sermon to you, we saw that even as Joseph was the Savior of a nation, that even so, that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the World. He was “the grain of wheat which fell into the earth and died”. Because Christ suffered and died, He bore much fruit; He produced much grain, it says in John 12: 24. He has been exalted by the Father, to His right hand. He has been given all authority in heaven and upon the earth. He was faithful unto death, even the death of the cross. And because of that great sacrifice of Himself, He now has stored up an abundance of grace which He is ready to bestow upon needy sinners, even upon all those who will come to Him for eternal life.

Last week we saw that Pharaoh had appointed Joseph to this good task of storing up grain in accordance with the wisdom given to him by God, in relation to the dream which Pharaoh had, that the famine would most certainly come and that it would be severe. Now that time was upon them, and so Pharaoh directed all the hungry people in his land to Joseph. Joseph had labored hard to prepare for this time. He had stored up grain like the sand of the seashore. He stored it up until he stopped counting it, for it was immeasurable. These preparations of the grain are like the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the great interpreter on behalf of God to interpret the purpose and will of God in relation to the salvation of men. God would have a people for His own possession. Pharaoh wanted to save his land and his people and so he directed the people to Joseph, for he was the one who had the answer to their great need.

Even so, in a much greater sense, God the Father would save His people from sin and from eternal death. And to that end, He has appointed the Lord Jesus to act on His behalf, in order to make provision for the needs of every man’s soul. Our Lord Jesus labored and suffered far more than Joseph to see that people do not perish eternally. He labored and travailed in the garden of

Gethsemane in prayer. He labored there with great cryings and tears until His sweat became great drops of blood. He suffered being scourged, and whipped, and mocked, and mistreated, until His face and body were almost unrecognizable. But even more, in enduring these sufferings, He bore the wrath of God which was due to your sins, if you are a sinner trusting in Him. If it was important in any generation that people do not perish physically in a famine, how much more important is it that people do not perish eternally because they do not have the gospel? People need the gospel; they need the Lord, even if they do not understand it.

In physical hunger, people understand that they must find food or perish. That is why all the people came to Joseph when they were directed to him by Pharaoh. In spiritual matters, people may be starving and yet not take the right actions to save their souls. In this case of physical hunger, in the famine in Egypt, the people were famished and they were directed to Joseph. Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold grain. The people came and they purchased grain from no other place than Joseph in Egypt. In the case of spiritual hunger and the feeling of emptiness in your soul; I would direct you and all the sinners in the world to Jesus Christ today. I say to you; if you have a hunger and thirsting in your soul for righteousness or salvation, you should come to Jesus Christ today and buy.

The salvation of your soul is a transaction which you must make with Jesus Christ or you will perish. It is based upon the need that you have as a sinner for the grace of God in Christ. Your soul needs grace to change so that you will be forgiven of all of your sins. Your soul needs spiritual strength to walk before God and to know how to live to Him, in the land of the living. But sometimes even Christians do not understand how much they need Christ's grace to them every day. Listen to the words of the Lord Jesus from Revelation 3: 17 to those who claim to be Christians and think themselves strong enough and sufficient enough to go through this life without grace. "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing – you do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked – I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see."

I read this to you, beloved brethren, so that you will know that to grow in your relationship with God and Christ, to walk before Him in righteousness and truth, requires a real provision and supply of grace to you. To love God and serve God takes provision of grace and supply of grace. To love others and to truly help them will require the same. This fullness of provision, the Bible tells us, is found in Jesus Christ. "And of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace." Not only grace, but grace upon grace every day. All who believe in Christ will pray to be supplied with this grace, in an on-going, daily, moment by moment basis. There is unmeasurable grace that has been stored up in Jesus Christ for sinners, and He is faithful to supply it to His people. But He does expect you to come to Him, and to ask Him for it.

Will you not come and buy? God the Father says, "Go to My Son, and whatever He says, do." The Lord Jesus says, "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Jesus says in John 6: 35, "I am the bread of life." "He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst." Jesus would bestow this grace upon each one who comes seeking this bread of life. Jesus said to the Devil when He was tempted – "Man does not live by physical bread alone, but by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God." Jesus Christ is the Word of God who will save and feed your famished soul. He opens His storehouses of gospel grace to every sinner who comes to Him. Any person who is empty, and who knows something of that gnawing pain of wanting to know the meaning of life, of wanting to be fed spiritually and be satisfied, should come to Christ. Do you see the provision that there is in Christ? Then you should come.

Jacob was convinced of his hunger and he was convicted by the provision of grain in Egypt. “Jacob”, it says, “saw that there was grain in Egypt”, (verse 1 of Chapter 42) and “Jacob said to his sons, ‘Why do you look at one another?’ “Indeed I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down to that place and buy for us there, that we may live and not die.” Sometimes when people think about coming to Christ for salvation, they hesitate. They look at others in their family, wondering what to do. They are waiting wondering whether this coming to Christ will really do something for them. Perhaps they are thinking of the implications of going to Jesus. What will it mean for me to be a Christian? Will I really find provision for my sins, even mine? Will I really find strength and comfort and joy and peace? I say to you – Hesitate not a moment longer! Jesus will give salvation to you if you come to Him. All of the implications of what that will mean; you leave those with Him. He will supply all of your needs according to His riches.

“But Jacob”, it says in verse 4, “did not send Joseph’s brother Benjamin, for he said, ‘Lest some calamity befall him.’” This leads me to say that sometimes parents may be reluctant to direct their children to go directly and immediately to Christ for salvation because they believe that they are too young; that they are too young and tender to understand and to believe for themselves. They think that some calamity will befall them if their child becomes a Christian in this sinful world of woe. If they do become a decided Christian, they think, then they will be open to the ridicule and perhaps even persecution of others at school, or in their neighborhood.

But these are not good reasons for keeping them back from coming to Christ. God is greater than all of your fears, dear parent, and He will give grace that will bring them the strength to face and to overcome all opposition and trial, as they seek Him for themselves. Better this, I say, than not directing them immediately to Christ. Who knows what might befall them in this life; and without Christ, all is lost. Now, I want you to see that God used this reluctance on Jacob’s part, in order to fulfill His good purposes when the brothers went down to Egypt. And God will work all things together for good, for you the Christian parent, who is well-meaning and who would protect their children from a cruel world.

2nd – Joseph showed His brothers tender mercy and yet He also brought them to conviction of sin. (verses 6-9 of Chapter 42)

It says in verse 6, “Now Joseph was governor over the land; and it was he who sold to all the people of the land.” “And Joseph’s brothers came and bowed down before him with their faces to the earth.” “Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he acted as a stranger to them and spoke roughly to them.” Verse 9 says, “Then Joseph remembered his dreams which he had dreamed about them, and said to them, ‘You are spies!’ “You have come to see the nakedness of the land!” As I read this to you, you are probably thinking – How is this his showing them tender mercy? It is tender mercy because it is in accordance with the dreams that Joseph had. His real and true intention is to show them mercy. But he will do it in accordance with the dreams that he had had so many years before.

It is also just as true that the Lord Jesus Christ distributes all of His mercy and grace in relation to Covenant of Grace and the everlasting purpose of the Father in Electing and Predestinating love. “All that the Father has given me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will not cast out.” All of the dreams of Joseph were being fulfilled even though the brothers did not know it at this time. So, too, the dreams of Jesus Christ, the predestinating purpose of God for Him to distribute grace to those chosen by the Father will be fulfilled in all their particulars. In John 17, in His prayer to the Father before He went to the cross, the Lord Jesus said – “Father, the hour has come.” “Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.”

This was the dream of the Son before the foundation of the world, for He prays in verse 24, “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may

behold my glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.” This love of the Father for the Son was what resulted in the Covenant of Grace whereby we are saved. It was the greatest and most precious gift of love, that the Father would give His Son to a world of lost and dying sinners, and the Son would purchase grace by His sufferings. It was grace that the Father and the Son would do this out of their love for all mankind in a general sense, in the Free Offer of the gospel, and in a particular sense for all of the elect. What a great and magnificent Divine Dream this is, which has become a reality to over a thousand generations people, and it will continue to be fulfilled until the end of the world.

Joseph treated his brothers as strangers and he spoke roughly to them in order to bring conviction to their hearts concerning their terrible treatment of himself 20 years before. This is how the Lord Jesus sometimes also deals with sinners who have been hurtful and willful against Him or against His people, when yet, all the while, He intends to show them mercy and to save them. The Apostle Paul is a good example of this. When Christ brought converting grace and power to bear upon Saul’s life to change his heart, He shone such a bright light upon him that he fell to the ground and heard the Lord’s voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” “And he said, ‘Who are you Lord?’” Then the Lord said to him, “I am Jesus who you are persecuting.” “Is it hard for you to kick against the goads?” He had to be led by the hand into Damascus because the light had blinded him.

And after 3 days without sight, the Lord sent a disciple named Ananias to him who laid hands on him and he received his sight. But Ananias had argued about going to do this good work for Saul who was to be renamed Paul. He had said to the Lord, “I have heard about this man how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem.” “And here he has authority from the chief priest to bind all who call on Your name.” This is what I want you to see and understand. The Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.” “For I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.

I would say that Saul was not an exception, but that a good many persons whom the Lord loves with an everlasting love will express trembling and astonishment in their being brought to saving faith. They will at some point in God’s dealing with them, stand amazed at how utterly wrong they had been in resisting the gospel and its preachers. They will be dismayed at how much they needed to be “spoken to roughly” to, in reproofs, before the life giving grace is bestowed upon them. But the Lord knows what it will take for each one of His chosen ones to be brought to saving faith in Him.

But 3rd – Joseph showed His brothers tender mercy and yet brought them to conviction of sin by testing them in regard to their sincerity. (Verses 10-17)

Joseph’s brothers did not think that they deserved this rough treatment from a man that they barely knew. They protested the accusation by this Egyptian ruler that they were spies. Verse 10 says, “And they said to him, ‘No, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food.’” “We are all one man’s sons; we are honest men; your servants are not spies.” Little do they know that Joseph knows exactly who they are; and he knows that they have not been honest men with regard to their treatment of him, the very man that they were speaking to! Joseph keeps asserting that they are spies. He was doing this deliberately for a reason. He knew that they had not been honest men with regard to the way that they had treated him years before .

Each one of us needs to take notice of this. We must understand that the Lord sees all and he knows all in regard to the actual state of our hearts. He knows the way that we have thought and acted in the past. We might assert that we are honest, when there are issues from the past in our lives, that if they were exposed, will prove that we are not honest people. Joseph’s brothers kept on asserting their innocence and telling Joseph more and more of the information

that he was seeking to obtain. “Your servants are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and in fact the youngest is with our father today, and one is no more.”

It will be good for us at this point if we really must take notice of the fact that Joseph knew how to get the information that he wanted, out of their hearts and out on to their lips, so that they would be judged by the very things which they most strongly asserted. Christ can do the same thing with you and me as well, if He so desires. After their strongest protests of innocence Joseph still comes back and says to them – “It is as I spoke to you, saying, ‘You are spies.’” “In this manner,” he says, “you shall be tested: by the life of Pharaoh, you shall not leave this place unless your youngest brother come here.” Here we must pause and admire the divine wisdom which was given to Joseph to bring these men to a real conviction of sin. He was testing them to find out whether anything had changed in twenty years, whether their hearts were still hard toward his father and his brother Benjamin. We should learn from this that if we have done to others, things which were wrong in the past, the Lord knows how to bring similar circumstances to bear, in order to test us to see if we have learned any of the lessons that He wants us to learn. Have we learned at all from the truth that he has shown to us?

He say in verse 16 – “Send one of you, and let him bring your brother *here*; and you shall be kept in prison, that your words may be tested to see whether there is any truth in you; or else, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies!” “So”, it says, “he put them all together in prison three days.” Let us understand that the Lord knows how to deal with every person and their sins, no matter how grave and complex they are; and no matter how long it has been that they have covered them up. He may indeed patiently wait 20 years or more to teach us lessons related to our sins of the past, in order to bring us to repentance and show us a better, more righteous way of living.

If you are going to come to know him, or if you do know him, He will bring you to the place that you are thinking in the right way about the people whom you have sinned against. He may put you into a prison-like situation in your life where it is impossible for you to get yourself out of it unless you are willing to learn the lessons of what is right and what is wrong in your attitudes and behavior toward others. Joseph did these things out of love to his brothers. Christ will do the same for His brethren and all of those who are going to come to know Him. It is the Lord’s mercy if you have come to experience conviction of sin, if it leads you to consider your ways and search your heart, and confess your sins to the Lord.

4th – Joseph showed his brothers tender mercy, but he also brought them to conviction of sin by preaching the law to them. (verses 18-24)

“Then Joseph said to them the third day, ‘Do this and live, for I fear God: If you are honest men, let one of your brothers be confined to your prison house; but you, go and carry grain for the famine of your houses.’” “And bring your youngest brother to me; so your words will be verified, and you shall not die.” Let us see from these words, that telling the truth is always the best policy that we can take when we are confronted with past sins rising up against us. When conviction comes to our hearts concerning any of our sins, whether those sins are in our heart alone, or whether they have broken out into our actions, if we will admit the guilt of them, rather than rationalizing them away, we are making progress in the right direction.

Listen to what the brothers said to each other. “Then they said to one another, ‘We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us.’” Notice how in this situation that they are in at this point, it brings back to them the memories of what they did 20 years before. Now they are admitting their guilt in the matter. Now they recount their sins. “We saw the anguish of Joseph’s soul...” Now, once again, they hear the reproof of their brother Reuben – “Did I not speak to you, saying, ‘Do not sin against the boy; and you would not listen?’” “Therefore, his blood is required of us.”

But notice the tender mercy of Joseph who knew what they were saying, and what they were confessing, even though they thought that he could not understand them. “And Joseph turned himself away from them and wept.” “Then he returned to them again, and talked with them.” And then it says in verse 24 – “And he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes.” Now, I would say that this is a very good picture of how Christ uses the law in relation to the salvation of men. Joseph says, “Do this and live”. The law is not of grace, but it has a definite purpose, and that purpose is a good purpose. It was given to show us the righteous requirement of God, and to convince us that we are sinners. We cannot use the law to justify ourselves.

In Romans 10: 5 it says – “Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, ‘The man who does those things shall live by them.’” But Christ is, “the end of the law for righteousness for everyone who believes”. In Luke 10: 25 when a lawyer came and tested Jesus, saying, “Teacher what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” “Jesus said to him – “What is written in the law?” “What is your reading of it?” The lawyer answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus answered him and said – “You have answered rightly; Do this and you will live.” Then it says, “But the man wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’” And then Jesus told him the parable of the Good Samaritan.

At the end of telling him that parable, Jesus said to the man – “So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?” And the man said – “He who showed mercy on him.” “Then Jesus said, ‘Go and do likewise.’” You see, it was not as though Joseph’s brothers were going to be able to make up for their sins by their own sincerity and by their following Joseph’s instructions. But he was convicting them of the fact that they had not shown him any mercy before, and yet now they desired mercy from Joseph. Joseph took notice of this. It says that “he turned himself away from them and wept”.

This is how Christ uses the law with you when you are seeking mercy in salvation. He says – “Do this and live.” He brings conviction to you of where you have not been merciful to other people in the past, when you should have been. He says, “Do this and live!” Repent of your sins; all the while knowing that it will take His instructions about seeking that grace to be a better person. If you will receive His instruction about how you should go about to repent, He will grant all these spiritual blessings to you, so that you will become wise and holy. It will be good for each of us to think about this. An honest man is willing to be bound by the convictions of their conscience, in regard to the law which they have broken, in order that they might eventually be shown the mercy of being guided into all the truth of what is good and right. Perhaps Simeon was the most guilty of all of the brothers in the way that he had treated Joseph. This is why Joseph bound him.

And this lead me to my 5th and final point – Joseph showed his brothers tender mercy and yet brought them to conviction, by beginning to show them the meaning of grace. (verses 25-28)

We will see more of Joseph’s gracious dealings with his brothers as we progress through these chapters, but here we find that Joseph begins to show these brothers of his, whom he loves, the way that grace operates. Verse 25 – “Then Joseph gave a command to fill their sacks with grain, to restore every man’s money to his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey.” “Thus he did for them.” “So they loaded their donkeys with grain and departed from there.” “But as one of them opened his sack to give his donkey feed at the encampment, he saw his money; and there it was in the mouth of his sack.” “So he said to his brothers, ‘My money has been restored, and it is in my sack!’” “Then their hearts failed them and they were afraid, saying to one another, ‘What is this that God has done to us?’”

In closing, I want you to see that when Joseph wanted to encourage them with his good intentions toward them, that he really did intend to do them good, that his love and his watchcare were over them to provide for them, he did this gracious thing. He restored their money. But instead of being encouraged by this, they were dismayed, and their hearts sank within them. They were afraid. What was this that God had done to them, they thought? They thought that they were in great trouble. For the money in their sacks made it seem as if they were guilty of something that they were not guilty of. But even this brought them conviction of sin and fear. They had finally come to see that it was God who was dealing with them; not simply Joseph.

And you and I need to see the same, as well. Salvation comes to us based upon the sheer mercy and grace of God, through Jesus Christ. It comes when we have close and personal dealings with Jesus Christ our greater Joseph. He causes us to see the meaning of grace; money in our sacks that Christ places there, so that we will see that blessings do not come to us because we deserve them, but because He has set His love upon us to save us. God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, is the only One who can bring salvation to you; and He does so, “without money and without price” on your part. He will test you as to your sincerity; whether you will cease to do evil and learn to do what is right. He will test your sincerity in regard to your repentance, to see whether you will turn away from doing wrong, but He will not stop doing you good during all the time He is bringing you to know that He is the One who is saving you from your sins. This is why going to Joseph is like coming to Christ. I hope that you will be content to plod along with me for a few more chapters, and together we will learn the lessons of faith, and a thorough repentance. And let us praise the Lord for the mercy that He has shown to us, even though we did not deserve it, through our Lord Jesus.